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THE DEFENDERS

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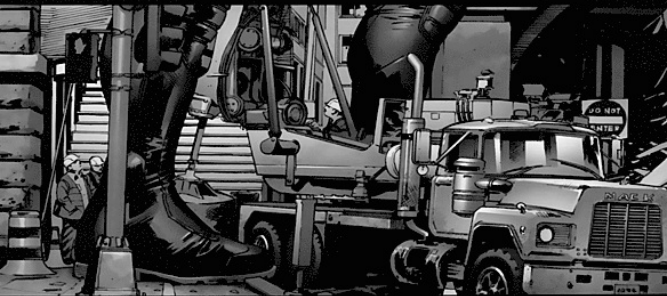
When faced with Nazi Germany's military advances, the U.S. government decided that the best weapon against them was a person, not a bomb. With this in mind, Steve Rogers volunteered for a covert military experiment that turned him into Captain America. After a few years of exemplary service, Captain America fell in battle—his body wasn't recovered.

Years passed and Captain America was found frozen in suspended animation. When he awoke, he was convinced to join Iron Man, The Wasp, Giant Man, Black Widow, Hawkeye, and Thor in forming the superhuman defense initiative run by Nick Fury, called The Ultimates.

Dr. Henry Pym was a scientist, working on recreating the lost Super-Soldier formula that had given Captain America his powers. Frustrated with his lack of success, Pym used genes from his size-changing mutant wife, Janet van Dyne (A.K.A. the Wasp), to create a serum which allows him to grow to up to 60 feet tall.

Calling himself Giant Man, Pym became an active member of the Ultimates—until he took his rage and self-loathing out on his wife, beating her severely. Cut from the team—and with Janet now dating Captain America—Pym's life has been in a slow downward spiral for the last few months...

THE DEFENDERS



STAN LEE PRESENTS:

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STORY

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BRYAN HITCH & PAUL NEARY

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CAPTAIN AMERICA CREATED BY JOE SIMON AND JACK KIRBY

Ultimates 2 (ISSN #1529-0443) No. 6, July 2005. Published Monthly except semi-monthly in February by MARVEL COMICS, a division of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP INC. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 417 5th Avenue, New York, NY 10016. APPLICATION TO MAIL PERIODICAL POSTAGE RATES IS PENDING AT NEW YORK, NY AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. © 2005 Marvel Characters, Inc. All rights reserved. All characters featured in this issue and the distinctive names and likenesses thereof, and all related indicia are trademarks of Marvel Characters, Inc. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or inventions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. \$2.99 per copy in the U.S. and \$4.25 in Canada (GST #R12302852) in the direct market and \$2.99 per copy in the U.S. and \$4.25 in Canada (GST #R12302852) through the newsstand. Canadian Agreement #40665037. Printed in Canada. Subscription rate (U.S. dollars) for 12 issues: U.S. \$27.00; Canada \$37.00; Foreign \$59.00. POSTMASTER: SEND ALL ADDRESS CHANGES TO ULTIMATES 2, C/O MARVEL, SUBSCRIPTION DEPT., P.O. BOX 39529 SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84139-0529. TELEPHONE # (800) 217-9158, FAX # (801) 208-0877, subscriptions@marvel.com. ADVERTISING: Marvel Creative Office: ALAN FINE, President & CEO of Toy Biz and Marvel Publishing; GARY CARP, Director of Production; LUKE CABELLER, Director of Manufacturing; DAVID BOGART, Managing Editor; FRANK LEE, Chairman/President. For information regarding advertising in Marvel Comics or on Marvel.com, please contact Joe Manno, Advertising Director, at jmanno@marvel.com or 212-578-3534. For Marvel subscription inquiries, please call 800-217-9158.

Manhattan:

When I look at these new *Giant Men* they've developed, I really just want to slit my wrists.

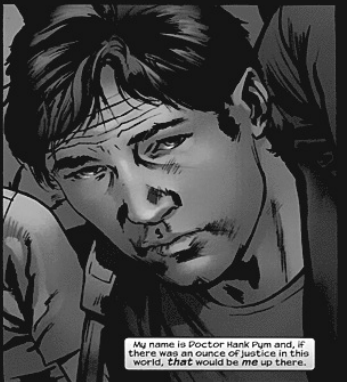




Not because all the *lemmings* are clapping with great, big goofy smiles on their faces. Not even because I'm on my way to an interview with some new, bargain-basement super-team.



I'm upset because they've broken the sixty-foot ceiling I just couldn't crack when I was Giant Man and, frankly, that degrades me as a *scientist*.



My name is Doctor Hank Pym and, if there was an ounce of justice in this world, *that* would be *me* up there.



My first meeting
with The Defenders:

Awesome to
hook up with you,
Giant Man.

Nice to meet
you too, ah, Nighthawk.
Hope I didn't **hold you
guys up** or anything?

Nah, we still waiting on
The Black Knight, anyway.
He don't finish work till a
little after seven and the
traffic's a nightmare over
the Brooklyn Bridge since
they rebuilt it.

You forget
your uniform,
Doctor Pym?

Oh, I don't **wear** a uniform
when I'm this size. The Giant
Man costume is sixty feet
long and in a lock-up
downtown. I have to grow
full size before I can
climb into it.

Really? I
didn't know
that.



My name's Patsy Walker,
but the way, but everyone
calls me **Hellicat**. You'll
have to excuse me getting
all flustered, but I've
never actually **met** a
celebrity before.



Power
Man. Son of
Satan.



The
Valkyrie.



And what
do you do
exactly?

I'm kind of a female Thor.
That's why I've got all the
Norse symbolism and
stuff going on in the
costume.

Really? Weather powers are pretty cool. Thor was amazing when we were fighting The Hulk back in Times Square.

Well, try to imagine Thor *without* the weather powers...

you got a magic hammer?

No.

Can you fly?

Not really...

...but I can bench-press two-fifty and I'm something of a martial arts expert.

What about you? Are you really Satan's son?

Are you on crack?

Listen, I know we're not exactly what you're used to with The Ultimates and everything, but we've got some real heavy hitters on this team too, you know.

Doctor Strange is one of our members, but he's on a psychic house call right now and two of the X-Men are talking about coming over once we get our funding together.

You're getting funding?

Oh, sure. That's why I told you to hang onto your receipt for the cab and any *other* expenses you might have.

Super-hero teams are the next big thing and we've got eight more companies willing to sponsor us once we've got *Giant Man* on our books.



Actually, the Giant Man powers are still owned by the U.S. government and I'm kind of in a legal dispute with them right now.



Oh no. Does that mean you can't join the team?



Maybe not as Giant Man, but I make up new ideas for super heroes all the time. This is something I cooked up a few months back and been tweaking for a while...



If it's anything noisy, we'll have to go outside. The landlord cracked up last time we had a...



Huh?



Right in front of you, Nighthawk. This is the new super hero I've made up. I'm calling myself *Ant Man* now. This helmet lets me talk to *ants*.



Man.

Can you believe we've finally got somebody on the team with *real* super-powers?

I refuse to feel guilty about this. She's nineteen years old, for God's sake. She was using me as much as I was using her.

So what if I told her I'd introduce her to Spider-Man and the X-Men? *Everyone* exaggerates when they're trying to get someone into bed.

Can't sleep. Valkyrie's snoring and my head's still spinning from all those vodkas we downed after the meeting.

I've only got another week until my appointment with Fury and these two *Ultron* robots are my last real chance of getting out of the pathetic rut I'm in right now.



Nobody else will *touch* me after what I did to Janet and my face being splashed all over the newspapers.

I've got nothing else in my life right now. I've never been this low. Is it really too much to expect the super heroes to save me like they're saving *everybody else* out there?

Ten minutes with
Nick Fury:



Kank, I've told you a million times:
It doesn't matter *how* many super-
hero identities you create for
yourself...we just can't have
you back on the team.



And I appreciate that,
Nick. I really do. That's
why I've started focusing
on these *androids*.

They're not quite *ready* yet,
but when they are, *Ultron* and
the *Vision Two* here will be as
strong as any of the *super-
soldiers* and completely
under *S.H.I.E.L.D.*
command.

Captain America might be *durable*,
but he's still a *human being*. What I'm
offering you here is utterly expendable
war machines...





Man, we can't put you back on a *salary*. You have any idea how *close* they're watching us right now?

I'm not *asking* for a salary. I'm giving you these ideas for *free*, Nick. I'm only trying to *help*.



Hank, please.

Don't embarrass me like this.



We got a *level eight* security situation and the whole team's about to be briefed on how we're gonna *respond*.

Please. Just let it go.



Nick, for God's sake.

I'm giving you this stuff for *free*.



Just let it go, Hank.









Fame at last:

Okay, here's the deal: I get a shot of you in action, you all get your faces in the paper. Valkyrie shows a little leg and breast. I figure I can get you a full-color-page.

Must be a *hundred* of these warehouses, Barbara. Kids'll probably have *been and gone* by the time we get there.

Oh, stop *moaning*, Hank. We all split up, we'll find them *no* problem.

What happened to *The Black Knight*?

Caught in traffic over by the Lincoln Tunnel. Says he'll be here, but we should probably start without him.

We in?

Easy. Ramono left the alarm off just like he said. We'll be in and outta here in fifteen minutes, *tops*.

Never gonna
get all these
cigarettes in
the car...

Just take whatever you can
carry, man. Zippo says he'll
give us five bucks a box so
just *grab* whatever you
need.

News just in
from the *Surgeon
General*, boys...

...cigarettes
are *bad* for your
health.

RUN!





Lunatic knocked my
tooth out, man.
Hell's he *thinking*
jumping on somebody
like that?

You figure he's got any
money in this thing? Lots
of little homemade
gadgets and stuff,
but...

Ooh.

Was you
planning to
go see your
boyfriend
after this?

Found fifty
bucks in one of
the *pouches*. That
all you got in here,
super hero?

for the cab
home after
my shift...

Whatchoo say? Cab home
after your *shift*? Man, a
cab ain't no way for a
super hero to
travel.

You wanna be a
super hero you gotta
learn to fly, dude.

No, please.
Don't...

Ain't you got a
Batmobile or a
Bat plane or some
other stupid thing?



Up,
up and
away!



HEY!

Valkyrie to Giant Man! Valkyrie to Giant Man! We've got to *do* something, Hank. Nighthawk's in trouble.



I'm On it, Valkyrie. Another ten seconds and every ant in the harbor's going to be swarming all over these creeps.



Piece o' crap knocked my tooth out, man.



Smashed my mom's windshield up too. I say we get the gasoline outta the trunk and *torch* this stooge.



Hank?

I'm doing my best. There's just not enough *ants*. I'm counting maybe thirty or forty, but nowhere *near* enough.



How d'you like *this*, huh? How d'you like *gasoline* all over your face?

Somebody get the matches...



Hank, for God's sake. Turn into Giant Man and *help* him...

I can't. I don't have my costume.



Hank, they're going to set him on fire...



DAILY BUGLE

NEW YORK'S FINEST DAILY PAPER

BUTT-ER LUCK NEXT TIME

Super-Hero Debut Descends Into Farce

LAST NIGHT SAW Brooklyn's first host to the faltering debut of a brand new super-hero team as they attempted to foil a robbery. After being tipped off about a petty theft in Brooklyn's warehouse district, where a small gang of youths were attempting to steal cigarettes, this new group, proclaiming itself "The Defenders," tried to plaster themselves across the city's newspapers.

Whereas more concerned citizens might have simply alerted the police, "The Defenders," led by a man calling himself Darkhawk, dressed up in homemade costumes and charged into the warehouse where the theft was taking place. The Bugle's own photographer witnessed Darkhawk being thrown from a second-floor window onto the hood of a vehicle below, before being brutally assaulted by the youths.

Statements including that of by witnesses including that of former Giant Man, Hank Pym, 34 (pictured), suggest that the wannabe crusader sustained severe head injuries before being thrown from the window. It was only Pym's timely intervention that prevented the victim from being burnt alive by the youths.

Police are now hunting for four youths in connection with the assault while the man known as Darkhawk remains in critical condition. Assistant district attorney Nick Setchfield is also looking into charging "The Defenders" with breaking anti-vigilante laws.

Once a member of the world's leading superhuman defense group, The Ultimates, Dr. Hank Pym's life is far from the glamour of Hollywood celebrity. Aside from his much-publicized divorce from fellow teammate Janet van Dyne (also known as The Wasp), he was fired from his position as head of the ultra-secret Super Soldier program at S.H.I.E.L.D. following allegations of physical abuse and a public brawl with Captain America in the streets of Chicago.

Triskelion insiders also suggest that Pym may be charged with illegal use of a controlled substance following his multiplication in Brooklyn last night.

Dr. Pym was not available for comment.





Fractured skull, broken ribs, a cracked pelvis and a ruptured spleen...not to mention a *full-frontal* picture of me in every newspaper in America.

Not exactly.

The Defenders aren't exactly off to a great start, huh?



You people don't really know Dr. Strange at all, do you?

Nope. Or Iceman. Or Colossus. Or any of the other X-Men we kind of hinted might be signing up.



I'm not even a martial arts expert.

I'm only just going for my orange belt the week after next and I failed my blue belt three times.

God, you must think I really, really suck, huh?

Oh, honey. Don't cry. C'mon, don't cry. We all make mistakes. Hell, I practically make an idiot of myself for a living.



C'mon, let's go home. Let's go find ourselves a nice bottle of wine and go back to my place and just pretend tonight *never happened*, huh?

O-okay. But before we take off, there's something I've been meaning to ask you...



It's just hard to believe you're the one that's been creating all these **problems** for everybody.

I mean, it all makes sense in a funny kind of way, but I just wouldn't have had you **pegged** as a traitor.

A traitor is someone who betrays what they **believe** in, Hank. This isn't a nation I believe in anymore.

I never asked for *Homeland Security* or *Guantanamo Bay* or this **big preemptive strike** they made us do on a **third-world country**.

you should have seen their faces today, Hank. They were terrified of us.

What are you talking about?

Haven't you seen the news?

Oh, Hank. It's been on **every channel**...

"...we crippled a
nation this morning."



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Riddle Me This : Who was the only man to play the Riddler perfectly?

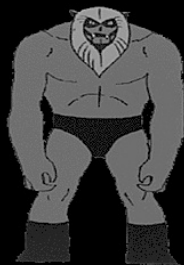
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